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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 000449

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TAGS: PREL PHUM KNPP UNSC IR IZ AF JA
SUBJECT: IRANIAN VISITORS TO JAPAN

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Classified By: Ambassador J.T. Schieffer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: The secretary of Iran's Human Rights Commission, Mohammad Javad Larijani, visited Japan February 11-18, 2008. He met with a number of officials, including the Foreign and Justice ministers. Although the purpose of his visit ostensibly was to discuss human rights issues and a possible prisoner exchange treaty, he also raised the nuclear issue, predicting the upcoming IAEA report will declare Iran did not have a nuclear weapons program even before 2003, which, when combined with the National Intelligence Estimate findings, will give Iran a clean bill of health. He also raised the idea of teaming with Japan to form assistance partnerships with both Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition to Larijani, the Japanese are also hosting a visit by opposition party leader and newspaper editor Muhammad Atrianfar. END SUMMARY.

MOHAMMAD JAVAD LARIJANI

¶12. (C) The secretary of Iran's Human Rights Commission, Mohammad Javad Larijani, visited Japan February 11-18 on his initiative, according to MOFA Second Middle East Division Principal Deputy Director Motosada Matano. He paid courtesy calls on Minister of Foreign Affairs Koumura and Minister of Justice Hatoyama, and was the guest of honor at a dinner hosted by Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Kenichiro Sasae. Other meetings were held with Deputy Foreign Minister for Foreign Policy Chikao Kawai, MOFA Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau Director General Norihiro Okuda, and with Diet member Taro Nakayama, a former foreign minister with ties to Middle Eastern countries and current chairman of the Japan-Iran Parliamentary Friendship League.

Human Rights

¶13. (C) Matano told Embassy Tokyo Political Officer that the ostensible purpose of Larijani's visit was to discuss "global human rights issues" and also to explore the possibility of negotiating a prisoner exchange treaty. According to Matano, 418 Iranians are incarcerated in Japan, making up roughly ten percent of the foreign prisoner population. This places the Iranians third after China (1400 inmates) and Brazil (500

inmates). He said Japan was a popular destination for Iranians during the 1990's when they had trouble gaining admission to western countries. Very few ended up staying, but a number of the "visitors" found themselves in trouble with the law, mainly for selling drugs and counterfeit telephone cards in the days before cell phones became popular.

14. (C) Larijani impressed his Japanese interlocutors, who found him to be smart, socially at ease, and very engaging, reported Matano. He admitted that Iran has human rights issues, but made a convincing argument that serious efforts are being made to address them and that Tehran is seriously interested in cooperating with and learning from others. Matano explained that although Japan is not satisfied with Iran's record on human rights, Tokyo will remain hesitant to publicly condemn Tehran because it believes the Iranians are attempting in good faith to deal with them. In other words, quiet encouragement and private expressions of concern are seen as more productive than public criticism.

Nuclear Issue

15. (C) The nuclear issue was raised by Larijani, who told the Japanese that Tehran expects the upcoming IAEA report will state Iran did not have a nuclear weapons program prior to 2003. This, coupled with the NIE's finding that there has been no nuclear program since 2003, will give Iran a clean bill of health, and enable it to engage in good faith talks with others on the future peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Larijani told the Japanese that Iran will accept any proposal that is mutually agreeable and that it will fulfill its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including accepting the presence of inspectors. He also warned that efforts to enact another Security Council resolution are

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counterproductive and are hampering the way forward on a peaceful dialogue.

Iraq - Afghanistan

16. (C) Larijani also mentioned Iraq, asserting that Iran is cooperating with the Iraqi people, and suggested that Iran and Japan could work together with the Iraqis on hospitals and infrastructure projects. Matano said Japan has no interest in partnering with Iran on Iraq, but did say that DFM Sasae is "somewhat interested" in exploring the possibility of Japanese-Iranian cooperation in Afghanistan, "if the project is right." For example, explained Matano, Larijani said Iran has a serious drug problem coming from Afghanistan and would like to work on projects to foster tighter border controls. At the same time, Japan is concerned about helping refugees and displaced persons in the same border regions. Perhaps there might be an opportunity for cooperation. Larijani also told the Japanese that Iran does not want NATO to leave Afghanistan prematurely, recognizing that such a move would lead to major problems.

UNSC Seat

17. (C) Both Japan and Iran wish to win the rotating non-permanent Asia seat on the 2009-2010 Security Council; however, this subject was avoided by both sides, reported Matano.

MOHAMMAD ATRIANFAR

18. (C) Matano also disclosed that Mohammad Atrianfar is currently in Japan from February 16 through 21 as a guest of the Japanese government. Atrianfar is a member of the

opposition Executives of Construction Party and has been the editor of a number of influential newspapers, including Hamshahri, Ham-Mihan, and Sharqh, where he is the head of the paper's Policymaking Council. His visit is similar to one of our International Visitor Programs and is intended to introduce him to Japanese counterparts and to gain a wider understanding of Japan. He was selected for the program by the Japanese Embassy in Tehran, which considers him to be an influential opposition voice. He is said to be a senior policy advisor to Hashemi Rafsanjani and has held positions in earlier Iranian governments, including in the Ministry of Interior.

SCHIEFFER